

REMARKS

The amendments made above remove the objection to claim 15 under 37 CFR 1.75(c) and the rejection of claim 16 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph.

The independent claims 14 and 21 stand rejected under 35 USC 102 over each of Fisher et al, Reynell and von Nordenskjöld. Claim 14 has been amended to clarify that the transport means transport preacidified materials from the preacidifier to the fermenter while leaving the raw materials, which have not been preacidified, in the preacidifier. Claim 21 has been replaced with a new claim 31 which includes similar limitations.

In accordance with claims 14 and 31, materials that have been preacidified in the preacidifier are transported to the fermenter while the raw materials, i.e. materials that have not been preacidified, remain in the preacidifier. Selection between preacidified materials and raw materials is accomplished, for example in the case of the embodiment described with reference to FIG. 3, by use of a sieve that permits preacidified materials to pass through while raw materials are retained in the preacidifier 2.

Fisher et al discloses a sewage sludge multidigester comprising an initial or primary digester 1 and a subsequent or secondary digester 2. The primary digester is used for active anaerobic bacteriological digestion and the digestion is completed in the secondary digester. Although Fisher et al discloses two digester basins, both basins are used for the same chemical reaction, i.e. digestion, meaning that the chemical reaction that might not be completed in the primary digester is completed in the secondary digester. See column 1, line 49. Thus, contrary to claims 14 and 21, Fisher et al does not disclose a preacidifier followed by a fermenter.

Fisher et al does not disclose or suggest that preacidified materials should be passed from the primary digester to the secondary digester 2 while raw materials remain in the primary digester, but, on the contrary, Fisher et al teaches that both

the concentrated solids and supernatant liquid are passed from the primary digester to the secondary digester.

Reynell discloses that liquid waste is supplied to a liquids digestion vessel and, after digestion, digested liquid is transferred from the liquids digestion vessel to the solids digestion vessel. Liquid also passes from the solids digestion vessel to the liquids digestion vessel. Reynell does not disclose or suggest how preacidified material should be transported from the liquids digestion vessel to the solids digestion vessel while retaining materials that have not been preacidified in the liquids digestion vessel. On the contrary, there is nothing in Reynell to suggest that the liquid delivered to the solids digestion vessel is anything other than of the same composition as the liquid in the liquids digestion vessel, i.e. a mixture of digested and undigested materials.

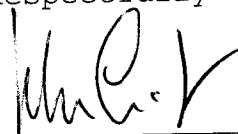
Similar comments to those made above regarding Reynell are generally applicable to von Nordenskjöld. The pump 18 that draws liquid from the basin 2 transports a mixture of preacidified materials and raw materials that have not yet undergone preacidification.

In view of the foregoing, applicant submits that the subject matter of claims 14 and 31 is not disclosed or suggested by Fisher et al, Reynell and von Nordenskjöld, whether taken singly or in combination.

The examiner relies on Mann as disclosing the feature of claims 16 and 19, i.e. a control device, and on Copa et al as disclosing the feature of claims 17 and 23, namely a sieve. Copa et al does not disclose or suggest that the filter bed, which the examiner compares to the sieve of claims 17 and 23, is used to distinguish between preacidified materials and materials that have not been preacidified and, on the contrary, teaches that the filter bed is provided in order to minimize the amount of residual solids wasted during the treatment process. In the circumstances, applicant submits that neither Mann nor Copa et al supplies the deficiencies of Fisher et al, Reynell and von

Nordenskjöld. Applicant therefore submits that claims 14 and 31 are patentable, and it follows that the dependent claims also are patentable.

Respectfully submitted,



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